



Blog: Dear white people in the UK

by Aishnine Benjamin, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion lead at the Nursing and Midwifery Council

For white people

First step. Read the short essay [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf) (Link: <https://www.racialequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>) by Peggy McIntosh, that visualises a physical representation of privilege. Robin Diangelo's *White Fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*, written by a white woman in the USA captures a discussion that is often missing, about what is 'whiteness'? For white people who often don't see themselves in racial terms.

Tips:

1. Don't be defensive. This isn't personal and it's not really about you. Everybody is at a disadvantage when our formal institutions perpetuate inequalities.
2. Don't say 'I'm not political' to excuse yourself from this conversation. Right now, ignorance isn't an excuse. You can't

unsee what you have seen.

3. You don't have to be vocal but do 'listen'. Listening means being open to hearing what black and minority ethnic people are saying. Be open to their lived experiences (if they choose to talk about them). You would be hard pushed to find a black or Asian person that doesn't have a personal story of racism.
4. Work on your empathy. Visualise yourself in the other person's shoes. Discrimination is dehumanisation and the only way to see a person as human is to empathise with them.
5. Be uncomfortable.

If you can read one book, watch one video, visit one place in this list that is a step towards change.

For everyone

There are some quick reads that summarise for a UK audience, how a poor understanding of the history of race and what racism really is, has created our current structurally racist systems. Afua Hirsch's *Brit(ish)*, Akala's *Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire*, Renni Eddo-Lodge's *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (with accompanying [About Race](https://www.aboutracepodcast.com/)
 (Link: <https://www.aboutracepodcast.com/>) podcast) and *White Privilege: The Myth of a Post-Racial Society* by Kalwant Bhopal, exploring the subtleties of modern-day racism, in the UK and USA.

In the UK we have black intellectual powerhouses who have written on these topics for decades. [Paul Gilroy's](https://youtu.be/Ta6UkmlXtVo)
 (Link: <https://youtu.be/Ta6UkmlXtVo>) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, will teach you about often forgotten moments in recent history – with examples of how racist ideology has shaped our social understanding. Stuart Hall was a sociologist and pioneer in the field of cultural studies whose work explored

the concept of Britishness. The [Stuart Hall Project](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4-ktD5I_Sc)
(Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4-ktD5I_Sc) film by John Akofrah captures his life and theories. For the wider colonial perspective; Franz fanon's *Black Skin White Masks* and Walter Rodney's *How Europe Under-Developed Africa*. Peter Fryer (a white man) wrote *Black People in the British Empire*, a fantastic introduction to empire and racism, connecting British history across the continents of Africa, Asia and the white settlements e.g. Australia and New Zealand.

If you like real life stories, the book *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain* presents interviews of people's first-hand experiences in the UK from the 1940s to the end of the twentieth century. And Sam Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners* captures the voice of post-war Caribbean migrants in London.

David Olusoga's book *Black and British a Forgotten History* and the tv series [Black and British a Forgotten History](https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b082x0h6/episodes/guide)
(Link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b082x0h6/episodes/guide>) is due to be rebroadcast on the BBC in June 2020.

And where would you buy all these books? Support Black book shops and publishers such as the iconic Beacon Books in Finsbury Park, London and many more that are [listed here](https://justreadit.co.uk/2020/06/02/more-black-bookshops-and-publishers-that-you-should-know-about/)
(Link: <https://justreadit.co.uk/2020/06/02/more-black-bookshops-and-publishers-that-you-should-know-about/>).

If you aren't a fan of reading books. Watch some videos. [A Class Divided](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE)
(Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mcCLm_LwpE), where Jane Elliot, a teacher in the USA in the 1960s divided the children in her all white class into blue eyes and brown eyes, the experiment teaching the children about the absurdity of racial divide led to Jane becoming a ground-breaking activist and repeating the experiment across the world where with communities and organisations with racial divides.

Go a on a black history walk or tour (after lockdown!). See the black British history on the streets you walk every day. [Black History Walks](http://www.blackhistorywalks.co.uk/)
(Link: <http://www.blackhistorywalks.co.uk/>) on London streets, Nadia Denton gives [tours of the Victoria and Albert Museum](http://www.africanheritagetour.co.uk/)
(Link: <http://www.africanheritagetour.co.uk/>) in London with an African focus, the [International Slavery Museum](https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/international-slavery-museum)
(Link: <https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/international-slavery-museum>) in Liverpool and Bristol museums information on the [black history of Bristol](https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristols-black-history/)
(Link: <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/stories/bristols-black-history/>). Support the [Black Cultural Archives](https://blackculturalarchives.org/)
(Link: <https://blackculturalarchives.org/>) in Brixton, preserving the national black British cultural heritage.

Explore the [British Black List](http://thebritishblacklist.co.uk/)
(Link: <http://thebritishblacklist.co.uk/>), an online platform which celebrates African & Caribbean creative professionals. The website [Black History Month 365](https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/)
(Link: <https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/>) is a good source of information across all areas; history, news, events etc and #BHM365 because black history is 365 days a year not just one month.

Research

In the UK we have some established race equality think tanks. The [Institute of Race Relations](http://www.irr.org.uk/)
(Link: <http://www.irr.org.uk/>), publishes the excellent Race and Class journal, and a newsletter on anti-racism and social justice activities in the UK and Europe that you can sign-up to – sobering reading on racist attacks that continue daily. The [Runnymede Trust](https://www.runnymedetrust.org/)
(Link: <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/>) and the [Race Equality Foundation](https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/)
(Link: <https://raceequalityfoundation.org.uk/>) publish research on racial inequality in the UK. If you just want stats and data the UK government website [Ethnicity Facts and Figures](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/)
(Link: <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/>) is comprehensive.

Educating our children

Black British history is British history. If it isn't in the curriculum the next generation are at a disadvantage and risk repeating the ignorance that has led to our current situation. A book that summarises the situation in the UK is *Tell it Like it is: How our Schools Fail Black Children*, edited by Brian Richardson and a video that captures the impact of a white mainstream media and narrative that perpetuates stereotypes is the [White Doll Black Doll experiment](#)
(Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybDa0gSuAcg>) by Kenneth B Clark and Maime P Clark. This experiment has been recreated globally with similar outcomes, including in the UK.

[The Black Curriculum](#)
(Link: <https://www.theblackcurriculum.com/our-work>) organisation, founded by Lavinya Stennett, have resources and run workshops for children to learn about black British history. The book *The History of the African and Caribbean Communities in Britian* by Hakim Adi is a simple book that primary school age children can revisit.

Buy books and toys that show the true diversity of the world we live in. [This is book love](#)
(Link: <https://www.thisisbooklove.com/>) sells multicultural books for children.

Call to action

1. Become informed and do what you can to change the one story narrative so that the future generations don't remain in the dark.
2. Be conscious and have intention in your actions. What will YOU do differently?
3. Understand the REASONS behind the current disparities that exist in society.

4. Use your power and your privilege for the benefit of humanity (everyone has some level of power or privilege at home, socially or at work). Break the foundations of structural racism.
5. Vote. Use that little bit of power that you do have. No matter what your political leaning. See the work of [Operation Black Vote](https://www.obv.org.uk/)

(Link: <https://www.obv.org.uk/>).

Finally – if you are a leader of people in any capacity and you are yet to be convinced about the positive benefits of working with or engaging with diverse people read *Rebel Ideas* by Matthew Syed. Diversity isn't a fun to have it's a must have.